

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 3541

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RO

SUBJECT: ROMANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF US PRESIDENTIAL CHANGES

1. SUMMARY: FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON HAD SPECIAL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CEAUSESCU. CONTINUED NOTES OF REGRET AND PERHAPS ALSO SELF-JUSTIFICATION MARK ROMANIAN PRESS COMMENT SO FAR, WITHOUT MENTION OF WHY NIXON RESIGNED. CEAUSESCU WILL WANT TO START RELATIONS WITH PRESIDENT FORD ON MOST POSITIVE TERMS, INCLUDING USG REASSURANCE THAT DETENTE WITH SOVIETS WILL NOT BE AT ROMANIA'S EXPENSE. HE WILL SEEK TO CONFIRM HIGH-LEVEL RAPPORT THROUGH SOME SORT OF PERSONAL CONTACT REASONABLY SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. RICHARD NIXON HAD A VERY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR CEAUSESCU AND ALSO FOR THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE. FOR CEAUSESCU, WHO RECEIVED HIM IN 1967 WHEN HE WAS SHUNNED ELSEWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE, NIXON'S ELECTION AS PRESIDENT AND HIS DRAMATIC VISIT HERE IN 1969 WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIRMATION OF CEAUSESCU'S OWN POLITICAL JUDGMENT

AND ENHANCED HIS STATUS GREATLY. HIS OWN SUBSEQUENT VISITS TO THE STATES AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF US-ROMANIAN RELATIONS WERE VISIBLE AND USEFUL REMINDERS OF ROMANIA'S SPECIAL SITUATION IN THE WORLD. FOR THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE, THE 1969 NIXON VISIT AND THE ENSUING EVIDENT RESPECTABILITY OF GOOD ROMANIAN-US TIES SERVED AS REMINDERS THAT THE US "CARES" ABOUT THIS PART OF EUROPE AND THAT SOMEHOW THIS MIGHT HAVE BENEFICENT EFFECTS FOR THEIR LIVES.

3. WHY RICHARD NIXON RESIGNED WOULD STILL BE A MYSTERY TO THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC IF THEY HAD TO RELY ONLY ON THEIR OWN MEDIA. AS A ROMANIAN JOURNALIST TOLD A VISITING AMERICAN EARLY LAST WEEK, THE POLICY WAS CLEARLY "DON'T TOUCH WATERGATE." THE REASONS PROBABLY LIE IN CEAUSESCU'S OWN CLOSE TIES WITH THE FORMER PRESIDENT AND THE GENERAL ROMANIAN AVERSION TO COMMENTING ON OTHER PEOPLE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THERE IS STILL OBSERVABLE IN FACT A CERTAIN NOTE OF SADNESS AND PERHAPS ALSO OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION IN THE PRESS COMMENTARIES ON PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION AND IN THE CONTINUING KIND REFERENCES TO HIM.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, ROMANIA HAS HAD NO TROUBLE IN RAPIDLY ADJUSTING ITSELF TO UNEXPECTED CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS ELSEWHERE AND PRIDES ITSELF ON HAVING THE SORT OF FLEXIBLE DIPLOMACY WHICH SEEKS CONTACTS WITH ALL. CEAUSESCU'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT FORD WITH ITS REFERENCES TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS FRIENDS AND HIS CLOSING PHRASE OF "SINCERE FRIENDSHIP" ADDRESSED TO THE NEW PRESIDENT STURCK US AS PARTICULARLY WARM AND AS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF A DESIRE TO START OFF ON THE MOST POSITIVE TERMS. DURING THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION, DESPITE HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, CEAUSESCU GAVE INDICATIONS OF PERIODIC NEED TO BE REASSURED THAT DETENTE WITH THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT BE CONDUCTED AT ROMANIAN EXPENSE. THERE IS A NOTE IN HIS MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT FORD OF HOPES FOR SIMILAR SIGNS OF UNDERSTANDING WHEN HE TALKS OF THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL STATES IN SOLVING INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS.

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5. UNTIL HIGH LEVEL RAPPORT CAN BE RECONFIRMED A COUPLE OF TIMES, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE SOME GREATER ROMANIAN SENSITIVITY IF NOT NERVOUSNESS TOWARDS HOW THE US APPEARS TO BE CONTINUING ITS DETENTE POLICIES WITH MOSCOW. CEAUSESCU MAY HOPE THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT FORD DOES NOT HAVE THE PERSONAL COMMITMENT IN DETENTE WITH BREZHNEV THAT PRESIDENT NIXON DID MAY

MAKE HIM MORE ATTENTIVE TO THE CONCERNS OF SMALLER NATIONS. IN ANY CASE, CEAUSESCU WILL FEEL IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE SOME SORT OF PERSONAL CONTACT EITHER HERE OR IN WASHINGTON REASONABLY SOON. IN THE PAST HIS FAVORITE TECHNIQUE IN THE PERIODS BETWEEN HEADS OF STATE MEETINGS HAS BEEN TO SEND A SPECIAL ENVOY TO WASHINGTON. BECAUSE HE KNOWS SECRETARY KISSINGER WELL AND WILL APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECRETARY'S CONTINUING IN OFFICE, CEAUSESCU WILL ALSO BE EVEN MORE EAGER THAN HE HAD BEEN EARLIER TO HAVE THE SECRETARY STOP HERE. EVENTUALLY OF COURSE HE WILL HOPE TO WELCOME THE PRESIDENT IN ROMANIA.

6. THE PROMPT DESPATCH OF A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO CEAUSESCU WELL ATTUNED TO ROMANIAN SENSITIVITIES FOLLOWED THE NEXT DAY BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S SEEING AMBASSADOR BOGDAN ALONE WAS EXACTLY THE RIGHT SORT OF START FOR US-ROMANIAN RELATIONS UNDER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. MY OWN JUDGMENT, GIVEN THIS GOOD START, IS THAT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO FOLLOW IT UP WITH SOME CONCRETE SIGN OF RENEWED ASSURANCES OF WASHINGTON'S HIGHEST CONSIDERATION BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. IF THE SECRETARY DOES NOT FIND IT POSSIBLE TO STOP IN BUCHAREST IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANOTHER TRIP AND IF THE PRESIDENT CANNOT RECEIVE A SPECIAL ENVOY, THEN ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE MIGHT BE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO SEE AMBASSADOR BOGDAN.

7. THE ABOVE COMMENTS ARE PRELIMINARY REACTIONS. WITH THE RETURN TO BUCHAREST OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP FOR THE POPULATION CONFERENCE AND THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO VERIFY THEIR
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BARNES

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